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ABSTRACT

The Maritime Trades Program is a cooperative training program that was established through the joint efforts of 14 shipyards in the Tidewater area of Virginia. Established in 1980, the program originally operated under the guidelines imposed by the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA). Now, however, the program operates in accordance with Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) rules and regulations. The 12-week program, which involves 4 hours of classroom instruction and 4 hours of hands-on training daily for 5 days each week, operates at a cost of $2,160 per student and serves 30 students per session. The program, which is designed to train entry-level employees for the participating shipyards, provides training in the following trade areas: sandblasting, painting, welding, shiplifting, pipefitting, machining, electrical work, and fiberglass handling. The program has succeeded in achieving and maintaining a 95 percent placement rate for program completers. (MN)

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A LOCAL INDUSTRY SOLVES ITS TRAINING NEEDS: A Cooperative Training Venture That Works

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This is a report of a "training success story". It is a report of how American business and industry can serve its own need for skilled labor and at the same time assist the unemployed in becoming a part of the American dream. It is a report of how the Federal government can assist both people and industry in underwriting a training program that does work. The purpose of this paper is to describe one industrys cooperative effort at providing a cadre of trained personnel using Federal funds as a basis to underwrite the training program. The program is the Maritime Trades Program located in Norfolk, Virginia.

Corporate training relationships between business/industry and educational institutions have become a major focus of attention during this decade. Part of the interest in these relationships has been spawned by the movement in the 1970's towards increased accountability for job specific training. Another part of the partnership movement can be attributed to a need for educational institutions to gain access to private sector high technology equipment which is too costly for school budgets. A third part of this new interest in sharing responsibility is best termed "community spirit." A very definite impetus to foster new partnerships between business/industry and educational institutions comes from the Federal government in the form of Public Law (P.L.) 97-300 The Job Training Partnership Act. This legislation is permanent legislation aimed at providing a foundation for creating training programs which address specific training needs of local community business and industry.

The driving force behind the program, first proposed in 1979, was the need for a supply of entry-level shipyard semi-skilled tradesworkers. The founding corporate principals became aware of Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) Federal funds and believed that a meaningful program could be developed which met the criteria of eligibility under this Federal Act and which would meet the company requirement for trained workers. The corporate principals indicated a certain social responsibility to the community unemployment situation as a reason for attempting this training program.

From MTC's inception, the three initial shipbuilding companies attempted to solicit participation and support from the other eleven yards in the Tidewater area. During the period 1979-1980, several meetings were conducted through which the potential corporate participants were introduced to this concept for entry-level training as a way to address the problem of shortages of trained entry-level tradesworkers. A professional trade association was established along with a tax exempt educational foundation and named the Maritime Trades Foundation (MTF). A concomitant Board of Directors, representing the companies electing to participate, sat over both groups.

The membership of the MTF held meetings in 1980 to determine the content of the training program curricula and procedures to establish a school. A training committee was established, consisting of working foremen representing their corporate leadership in curricula decision making. The curricula format consisted of instruction in nine trade areas, specifically:

1. sandblasting
2. painting
3. burning
4. welding
5. shipfitting
6. pipefitting
7. machining
8. electrical
9. fiberglass

The breakout of units of instruction was left to the instructional personnel who would be hired later.

The MTF Board of Directors searched for an Executive Director to assume leadership of the Maritime Training Center (MTC). After recruiting, screening and interviewing candidates, they offered the position to a retired U.S. Navy Captain who had previously been employed in a position with an area Manpower Training Authority. This individual came to the organization with knowledge of the student/client who would be the potential consumer of CETA training offered at MTC, the interface knowledge necessary to successfully operate between company, STAMA and potential employees, as well as a knowledge of the shipyard working environment and trades skills areas. The Executive Director

was initially charged with locating an appropriate facility for training as well as recruiting a staff of instructors and office support.

Program startup costs for the MTC were written into the first program proposal for an amount of approximately $80,000 and was provided by STAMA in response to a proposal submitted by the Maritime Trades Foundation. This cost was primarily for facility renovation to the structure which was leased by the program from a participating company for $1.00 per year. Present sustaining costs are $2,160 per student this includes costs for the three instructors, an Executive Director, secretarial support and utilities for the operation of the facility. Most materials and equipment come from corporate donations. The renovation of this facility has been incorporated into the curricula to give the student body hands-on-training in the various trades.

The MTC Executive Director recruited the instructional staff. While there has been a turnover in personnel, he seeks to employ individuals who possess knowledge and experience directly related to the shipyard trades, a knowledge of the instructional process and an ability to communicate and relate to the student population.

The current program is conducted as follows: The Executive Director of the MTC has overall responsibility for the day to day operation of the school, in terms of budget administration, staff supervision, student personnel administration, etc. Foundation management oversight of these matters occurs at monthly board meetings at which formal decisionmaking is rendered. Expenditures of money are handled via dual signature authority, the Executive Director and any one member of the Board of Directors. External audit of finances and student placement and retention is handled by STAMA, as per JTPA statute.

Modification to the curricula is accomplished periodically by the Executive Director and Education Committee Board based on inputs from the instructors, corporate personnel directors and STAMA feedback. The instructors indicated that periodic instructor course outline revisions are made as information is provided to them via contacts in the shipyards indicating need for such changes.

Student recruitment into the program is handled in accordance with CETA, now Job Training Partnership Act regulations and requirements. Specifically, recruitment is publicized in the local news media via a training announcement running for 3-4 days calling for applications from individuals desiring training and employment in the maritime industry and meeting certain requirements. This call brings approximately 300 applicants for a class which can handle 30 trainees. These figures represent the conditions associated with a 4% unemployment rate for the Tidewater area. Initial screening of applications is done by the MTC Executive Director and his staff of instructors. Criteria utilized includes a residence requirement (Tidewater area), financial eligibility requirement, citizenship (U.S.). age minimum 18 years, no upper limit, medical exam and a minimum score on a standardized achievement test (California Achievement Test). After the initial screening 100 of the applicants are selected for interviews. Through these interviews the staff attempts to identify those candidates who are serious about seeking employment in the shipbuilding industry. Once the 30 trainees are selected, STAMA processes their eligibility papers. The student body is representative of both sexes, all races, high school drop-outs, college graduates, and a variety of ages.

The three month formal course of study is organized into an eight hour day, five days a week for twelve weeks. The morning session each day is utilized for classroom activity. Instructor planned lectures are aimed at required related information encompassing the nine trade areas. Safety and shipyard practices are included: Employment related information is provided by guest speakers from the shipyards including most of the personnel department representatives, corporate executives and journeymen workers. The afternoons are devoted to hands-on shop practice in each of the nine trade areas. Activity is planned in a manner to present all of those manual skills activities which the student should experience prior to working in the yard. Emphasis is placed on ensuring that the working conditions found in the shipyard is replicated in the training program - specifically dirt, temperature extremes, noise and other often undesirable conditions. The objective is to make sure that the student knows what to expect upon arrival

on the job. Additionally, activity is planned in the continual development of the shop facility utilizing student labor. This allows for more diversified types of shop experiences. The participating companies are cooperative in providing materials and surplus machinery to outfit the shop. Trips to the State Surplus Warehouse also provides access to equipment. Students are evaluated both on written test results and on practical shop work. Feedback provided indicates a very fair and effective evaluation system. This program operates on a performance-based JTPA contract, in which funding becomes contingent on the training program's ability to meet certain pre-established performance goals relating to trainee placement and performance.

The instructors take a very active interest in both the academic progress of the student as well as the well being of the student with respect to their ability to survive during and after the completion of the course. This is manifested in the assistance offered via matching the student to applicable financial assistance, medical attention and counseling, assistance in job placement and replacement, if necessary, and the maintenance of records and follow-up of each student over the lifetime of the program. From the point of graduation, which is a formal ceremony complete with noted guest speakers, it is clear that the student has joined a respected alumni community.

The participating employers indicate that to the fullest extent possible they hire graduates of the MTC program. While it is noted that there is no guaranteed promise of employment when entering the program, due to a very close liaison by the Executive Director with corporate decision makers, a placement rate of 95% has been achieved and maintained. The STAMA organization indicates this is both exemplary, and possibly the only such program to achieve this record. Student graduates are aware of the need to excel on the job in order to remain employed, and according to corporate personnel, display very fine work attitudes and behaviors, due at least in part to their MTC training.

The shipyard executives indicate that as a result of the Trade Association, and of participating in the Association's activity, they are benefiting from the opportunity to meet and discuss matters of mutual interest and concern to decisionmakers in their industry. As a result of these discussions a collective voice was emanating in the shipyard industry in the Tidewater area, heretofore not heard. Additionally, as a result of this collective problemsolving effort, a sharing of business pursuits, resources and ideas is taking place.

The measure of program effectiveness for a training program is in its ability to prepare a job ready trainee. This program has achieved that goal to a remarkable level. It has done that at a very reasonable unit cost per trainee. Moreover, in doing so it has created a most desirable atmosphere for inter-company cooperation and communication. In the estimation of those closely associated with the program and with other programs similar in nature, the Maritime Trades Foundation program has been described as the epitome of a cooperative training program.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

In order for this presentation to be of benefit to managers of business/ industry and educators alike, the successful elements of the Maritime Trades Program should be highlighted and discussed. These successful elements are enumerated as follows.

(1) The local shipyard industry executives actively support the Norfolk cooperative training program. The Presidents, CEOs, and senior managers of the 14 companies involved are very pleased for several reasons. They are very much involved in the process of producing an independent citizen with pride in his work. They believe, along with the PIC and STAMA, that they are overseeing the use of Federal monies in a very productive manner. Virtually all are pleased and somewhat surprised at the carryover, from the initial inception of the training center, to increased cooperation in other areas of business.

(2) The Private Industry Council (PIC) and the Southeastern Tidewater Area Manpower Authority (STAMA), charged with proper disbursement of Federal funds, are very pleased with the results of this program. The Training Center comes close to a perfect score in terms of meeting the JTPA criteria for a training program. The program has an excellent placement record, low unit cost, and quality training.

(3) The Maritime Training Program is effectively operated and implemented. The Executive Director of the MTC and his instructors know that they are performing a worthwhile task in terms of instruction, counseling, and motivation. The measure of program effectiveness for a training program is its ability to prepare a job-ready trainee. This program has achieved that goal to a remarkable level. It has done it at a very reasonable cost per trainee. Moreover, in doing so it has created a most desirable atmosphere for intercompany cooperation and communication. In the estimation of those closely associated with this program and other programs similar in nature, the Maritime Training Center's program appears to be a very successful cooperative training program.

(4) Students accepted into the program have high course completion and job placement rates. Current students and graduates speak essentially with one voice. They spoke of appreciation for: (1) the opportunity, (2) the efforts of the instructors to teach both skills and attitude, and (3) pride in their own accomplishments.

(5) There are a number of influences within the Norfolk geographical area that contribute to the success of the Training Center. Among the most significant are:

a. A large amount of ship repair business, both from the U.S. Navy and commercial customers, which has been either steady or increasing in recent years.

b. Local shipyard management has virtually a free hand in hiring, promotion, and wage policy areas.

c. Tidewater is a large maritime center, and as a result the ship repair industry exercises significant influence on the Private Industry Council (PIC) in terms of ensuring that the training of shipyard workers receives adequate priority under JTPA.

d. The general economic health of the area increases the assurance of hire for well-trained helpers in basic maritime trade skills.

(6) At the outset, there were several major factors that preceded implementation and success of the program. These included:

a. Initially, an organizer among the shipyard executives who was the catalyst for the program.

b. The senior executives of the involved companies actually debating and deciding on what type training they needed.

c. The selection of an energetic, highly experienced and competent person as Initial Executive Director for the Training Center.

d. Submission of a proposal to the STAMA for funding of the program under CETA/JTPA federal funds.

e. The support and cooperation of the involved companies to ensure continued success of the Training Center, such as support "in kind", in the form of equipment, material, work standards and human resources.

f. Other businesses/industries and educational organizations considering cooperative training programs should:

1. Determine the availability and appropriateness of JTPA funds for the anticipated training activity.

2. Identify a method of organizing the local industry for the purpose of establishing cooperative training (e.g., an association, a non-profit educational foundation, etc.).

3. Determine the nature of "in kind" support that the local business/industry base can furnish to a cooperative program.

4. Contact the Director, TMTI if other specific information is needed on the Norfolk area program.

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